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# The History of Creative Commons



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# Prehistory of Creative Commons

- In the mid 90's, the popularization of the digital technologies, Internet and the World Wide Web, expanded people's capabilities to create, share and remix cultural materials.
- But the entertainment industry saw in the democratization of knowledge a danger to their monopolies. So they pressed hard to extend and expand intellectual property rights around the world.



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# Prehistory of Creative Commons

- The tension between new cultural practices based on new technologies, and ever growing intellectual property rights, became very clear in the United States with the approval of the [Sonny Bono Copyright Term Extension Act](#) (also called Mickey Mouse Protection Act).
- This law, enacted in 1998, extended the copyright term of intellectual works in the United States to the life of the author plus 70 years.



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# Prehistory of Creative Commons

- Lawrence Lessig, a Stanford Law Professor, challenged the constitutionality of the Sonny Bono Copyright Term Extension Act.
- Lessig represented Eric Eldred, a publisher dedicated to publish works which had entered the public domain.
- The case [Eldred v. Ashcroft](#) reached the US Supreme Court.

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# Prehistory of Creative Commons

- Lessig's main argument before the Supreme Court was that, while the copyright term must be limited, continuous term extensions caused that works never enter the public domain.
  - Another argument was that when a copyright term extension is applied to works already published, it doesn't incentivize authors' creation.
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# Prehistory of Creative Commons

- The US Supreme Court disagreed with Lessig's arguments and the Sonny Bono CTEA remained in force.
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# Why CC was born

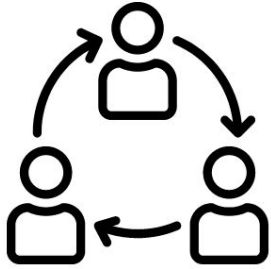
- This legal defeat led Lessig and others to think about other solutions to facilitate sharing and remixing cultural works on the Internet.
- They worked to create a set of free, public, copyright licenses that every creator could use to share her or his works giving more freedoms to the users. Those are the [Creative Commons licenses](#), first published in 2002.
- They also created a [non-profit organization](#) with the aim of stewarding the licenses and provide its infrastructure.

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# Why CC was born

- The goal of CC licenses had two sides:
    1. From the perspective of the individual creators and users, they provided an alternative approach to copyright, helping to share and use works easily online.
    2. From a social perspective, they set the infrastructure for a global pool of knowledge commons from where everyone could take and contribute freely.
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## CC's growth

- In a short time, a movement of free culture activists and creators was formed around the world. This movement promoted the CC licenses and also the values behind them.
- CC licenses were translated to multiple languages, and nowadays there are CC local communities around the world.



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# CC today

- Today, there are more than 1,6 billion (yes, 1,600,000,000!) works online that use CC licenses.
- CC licenses are integrated in the main user-generated content platforms, and are used by creators and institutions (universities, libraries, museums, etc) around the world.
- It can be said that CC licenses are the global standard for sharing free and open content.



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## CC today

- Currently, thousands of activists, institutions and creators around the world promote the CC licenses and values.
- They are part of the broader Big Open movement, which also includes Free Software advocates, Open Access advocates, etc.
- More than 500 CC activists participate in the CC Global Network, sustained by the CC organization, organized in local chapters and thematic platforms. [You can join!](#)